

IN NATURE'S WONDERLAND; OR, ADVENTURES IN THE AMERICAN TROPICS.

BY FELIX L. OSWALD.

CHAPTER VIII.

"Know ye what creatures these Lagunas breed,
Or what the pathless virgin-woods secrete?"—CHAMISSO.

THE people of Guatemala had treated us so kindly that we were almost sorry to leave their mountains; but our agent wanted a number of animals which are found only in the Southern tropics, so we took our pets to the sea-port of San Tomas, and embarked for South America on board of a Venezuela schooner. When the first Spanish explorers set sail for the New World, their enterprise was aided by the western trade-wind, the Atlantic sea-breeze that blows continually from east to west, and the same wind now enabled our schooner to enter the mouth of the Orinoco, and ascend the river by keeping close to the southern shore, where the current is not very strong.

We had paid our passage to Port Gabriel, some twenty miles farther up; but, if the lower shores had not been quite so swampy, we could not have wished a better hunting-ground. Swarms of water-fowl hovered about the mud-banks; peccaries and river-hogs rooted at the edge of the cane-brakes, or scrambled for their hiding-places; clumsy manatees sported in the water; and on a log of drift-wood we saw an animal that our pilot recognized as a fishing-jaguar. The creature had ensconced himself in the fork of a floating tree, and seemed to have made a good catch, for we saw him crunch away at something—probably a river-turtle or a young manatee; but, when the passengers began to fire upon him, he managed to crouch behind a projecting bulwark of his log-boat, whose swaying, together with the movement of our own ship, would have made it a task for the best marksman to hit the few visible parts of his body.

"Never mind," said the pilot; "it's one of the common spotted jaguars. I thought it was one of the dark brown kind."

"Have you ever seen a brown jaguar?" I asked.

"Yes, and a coal-black one, too," said the pilot; "though it may have been a different kind of animal—like my snake here: one of the 'what-is-its' that have never been seen in North America. You will come across some curious creatures, if you are going to hunt in these shore-thickets."

The pilot himself was a curiosity in his way. His hair was braided into a sort of diadem, and he was

hung around with trinkets like an Indian medicine-man. He had with him a tame snake that made its head-quarters in the upper sleeves of his shirt, and, judging from its color, the creature seemed really a nondescript—reddish-brown, with beautiful orange-yellow spots and rings, and with a black zigzag line along its back. He would not sell it; but, when we reached Port Gabriel, he took us to a house where we could buy four toucans, or rhinoceros-birds, besides some rare parrots, thus getting us a basketful of pets on the first day of our landing.

Near Port Gabriel, the banks of the Orinoco rise into high bluffs, and the ground is dry enough for foot-travelers; but the vegetation is still wonderfully luxuriant. Some of the larger trees were surrounded with such a wilderness of tangle-vines that it was quite impossible to distinguish their foliage and flowers; only the palms towered above the undergrowth, like steeples above a jumbled mass of houses; and a few of the lower plants could be distinguished by the peculiar shapes of their leaves. The children of the Indian settlers wore a grayish-green head-dress, which I mistook for a painted straw hat, with a short brim, until I found that it was made all of one piece—the pitcher-shaped flower-sheath of a species of tulip-tree. The store-keeper was the only white man in the settlement, and, hearing that we were bound for the western frontier, he procured us an extra guide, a swift-footed Indian lad, who could show us the way as far as the Lascar Mission, where we should find a good road to the mouth of the Rio Meta. The little fellow's speech was a queer muddle of Spanish and of Lascarese; but he evidently knew what he was hired for, and, pointing to the woods and then to our hunting implements, he gave us to understand that we should soon fill our baskets with birds and beasts. We certainly had dogs enough to do it. The village swarmed with Indian curs, and, when we started the next morning, ten or twelve of them followed us with gambols and merry yelps. The poor fellows probably thought we were out on a forage, and hoped to come in for a share of venison; but Daddy Simon chased them back—all but one, a long-legged wolf-hound, of a breed which the Indians often use in their panther-hunts.

About six miles from the landing, we came to a creek, with a hanging bridge of liana-ropes, and

an artificial ford of submerged logs, where our mule could wade across without getting beyond her depth. Our new hound cleared the creek with a



THE INDIAN PILOT AND HIS TAME SNAKE.

single leap; but old Rough, having entered the water rather cautiously, suddenly drew back, and ran up and down the bank as if he were afraid to repeat the experiment.

"What's the matter with that dog?" asked Tommy. "He is n't afraid of cold water, is he?"

"Come on," said I. "He will soon follow us if he sees us going away."

But Rough still ran to and fro, with an appearance of great uneasiness, until our vanguard had turned the corner, when he at last plunged in and paddled across, splashing and howling as if he were bathing in a tub of scalding hot water. Our little pioneer watched him with great attention, and repeatedly called out a word in his native language.

"What is it, Niño?" I asked, pointing to the creek—"alligators?"

"No, no!" cried he, and shook his head. "Here," holding out his finger with a repetition of the Lascarese word. We could not make out what he meant. But, seeing that Rough had got safely across, we continued on our way and had almost forgotten the incident when Tommy suddenly stopped short, and, throwing himself on the ground, caught Rough's head with both hands. "Good heavens!" cried he, "look here. No wonder the poor fellow would not cross that creek. Look at his throat!"

That explained it, indeed. From his throat to his flanks, the old dog was entirely covered with swamp-leeches, most of them not larger than a pencil-stump, but some as big as a man's finger. We removed them as well as we could; but, between the bites of the little pests and our clumsy operation, the poor dog lost half the blood in his body. He was hardly able to follow us; but the young Lascar and his hound were restless themselves. Not content with keeping ahead of us, the little barefoot lad made detours to the left and right, and often through thickets of thorny mesquites, paying no heed to the sharp spines.

"Why, that's nothing," laughed Menito. "I could do that myself two years ago. That's what they call Indian sandals."

As a matter of fact, the sole of the human foot can become as tough as any shoe-leather; and, while shoes wear out from day to day, our natural sole-leather improves in course of time, till a barefoot man is actually able to crush a thorn by stepping upon it. Nay, the Indians of the Peruvian highlands walk unhurt with naked feet over old lava-beds, in places where the ground resembles a field strewn with heaps of broken glass.

The Indians of the lower Orinoco live on the spontaneous products of nature, and their forest is, indeed, an inexhaustible store-house of animal and vegetable food. The thickets swarmed with *gazapos*, a kind of short-eared rabbits, and, at the foot of a little hillock, a black cock-pheasant came fluttering across our road and was captured before it had reached the underbrush. "There must be hunters around here," said Tommy; "this poor rooster is crippled, I see."

The pheasant seemed to have broken one of its wings, and was too tattered-looking for a menagerie-bird, so Menito killed it at once and put it in our mess-bag. We supposed that there must be an Indian hunting-party in the neighborhood, but, when we reached the top of the hillock, a young puma jumped out of the liana-brambles and whisked up a tree when he saw our wolf-hound. There he stopped, and, peeping through the lower branches,

kept up a continuous growl, exactly like a tomcat on top of a fence with a swarm of dogs around. Tommy had already leveled his gun, but the young Lascar stopped him with a frightened exclamation, and pointed to the woods, shaking his head violently, by way of emphasizing his protest.

"He means the puma's relatives will come after us," said I, "but he is right: let the creature alone; we have no use for him, and he has not done us any harm."

"And that's more than the puma can say," laughed Menito. "I believe we have stolen his supper: this pheasant came running down-hill when I saw him first."

Before we were out of sight, we turned around to see if the puma was still on guard, and, sure enough, his yellow head was still peeping from between the lower branches. He had stopped his growling, but from the depths of the woods on our right we heard a singular noise, as if a herd of cattle were breaking through the underbrush.

"Listen! What can that be?" asked Tommy.

I was unable to tell; as far as I knew, the settlers of these river-bottoms kept no cows, and deer are rather scarce in eastern Venezuela. Before anything came in sight, the big wolf-hound dashed into the thicket, going straight in the direction of the mysterious noise. Rough merely pricked up his ears; the swamp-leeches had cured his racing propensities for a day or two. I knelt down to examine his swollen throat, while my companions pursued their way, and I had not yet

come up with them, when the crash of a mighty gallop came through the woods, and, looking up, I saw Menito pull his frightened mare behind a tree, while Daddy Simon snatched away Tommy's gun with a violence that almost knocked him down. The young Lascar had thrown himself flat on the ground, and in the first terror of an unknown danger I followed his example, holding Rough by the throat, as Daddy Simon did Tommy, who seemed wild with indignation at such unceremonious treatment. But in the next moment he, too, crouched down, panic-stricken: a herd of peccaries came thundering through the bushes, in head-

long pursuit of the luckless wolf-hound, who, happily for the salvation of our little party, made straight for the place where he had seen us last, and before he could turn to the right, the boars in the vanguard had cut off his way and chased him straight ahead toward the river-bottom, where finally the uproar of the wild chase died away in the distant shore-thickets.

"That dog started the wrong game," laughed Menito.

"It's the luckiest thing he ever did that he managed not to start them running this way," remarked old Daddy.

"Why, would they have tackled us?" asked Tommy.

"Tackled us? They would have torn us limb from limb," said the Indian.

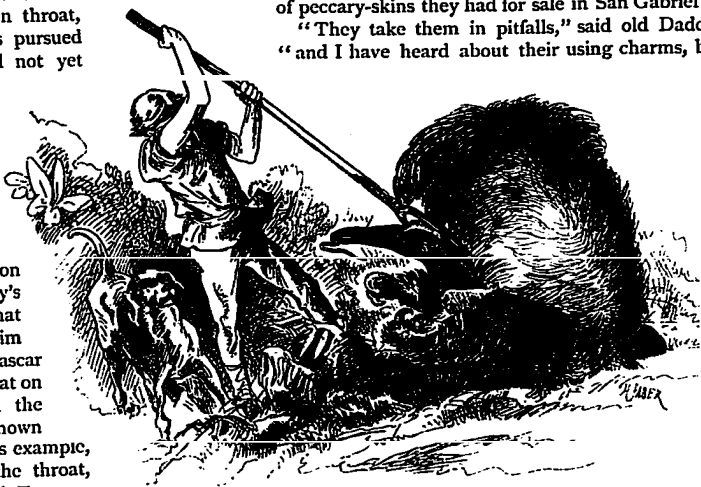
"Yes, indeed, Tommy," I added, "if you had fired that gun, it would have been your last shot."

"Then I have to ask Daddy's pardon," said Tom. "To say the truth, I thought he was going to rob me or kill me, by the way he acted. Why, according to that, peccaries must be quite unmanageable brutes."

"In large numbers they are," I replied. "A herd of them is more dangerous than a pack of hungry wolves. The old boars do not know any such thing as fear if they are in a rage."

"Then I wonder how the Indians catch them," said Tommy. "Don't you remember the large pile of peccary-skins they had for sale in San Gabriel?"

"They take them in pitfalls," said old Daddy, "and I have heard about their using charms, but



THE FIGHT WITH THE ANT-BEAR.

I don't believe it: peccaries have no religion whatever, and are very hard to bewitch."

As long as the echo of the crashing gallop was

still audible, our dog Rough had stood spell-bound, looking fixedly in the same direction, but, hearing a rustle in the thickets on the other side, he turned his head that way, and, suddenly setting up a fierce bark, trotted forward as fast as his weak legs would carry him.

"Dear me! More peccaries?" whispered Tommy. "Look out, or we shall get ourselves into a scrape, after all."

"No, look here—it's an ant-bear," cried Menito. "Quick—run! We can head him off—it's quite a young one."

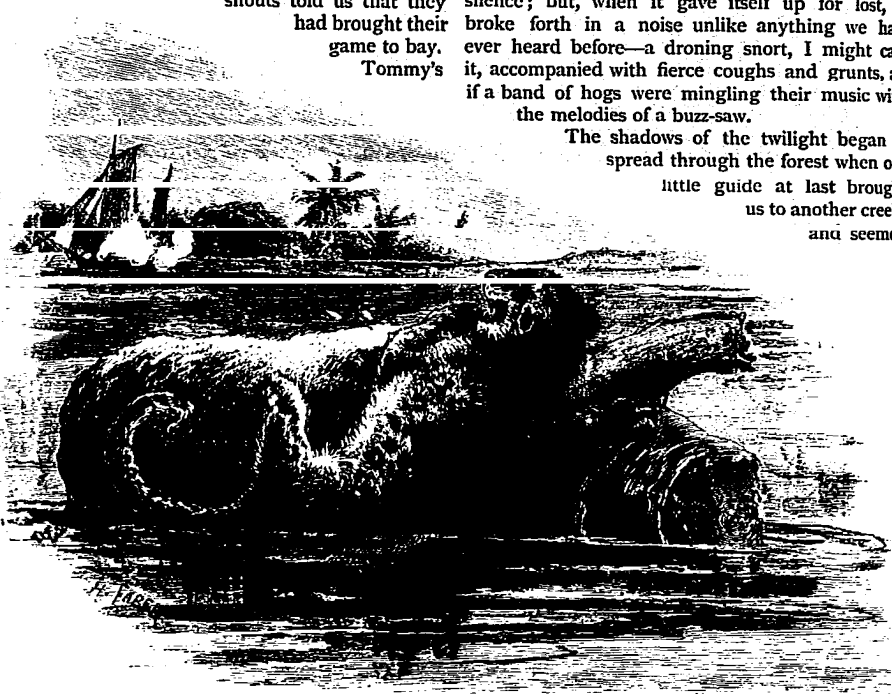
The three boys started at the top of their speed, and soon their triumphant shouts told us that they had brought their game to bay.
Tommy's

his weak condition, was no match for it, but the presence of the boys kept it at bay until Tommy approached it with his forked stick.

"Let me handle that thing," cried Menito. "Yes, there he goes; give it here, quick!"

The ant-bear had suddenly started to its feet; but, before it had run twenty paces, Menito's fork caught it behind the shoulders and pressed it to the ground. Menito had to bear down with all his might to hold the little animal, but help was at hand. In spite of all his claws, Master Longnose was overpowered, and clapped into one of the wire prisons. While there was yet any chance of escape, the ant-bear had struggled in silence; but, when it gave itself up for lost, it broke forth in a noise unlike anything we had ever heard before—a droning snort, I might call it, accompanied with fierce coughs and grunts, as if a band of hogs were mingling their music with the melodies of a buzz-saw.

The shadows of the twilight began to spread through the forest when our little guide at last brought us to another creek, and seemed



"WHEN THE PASSENGERS BEGAN TO FIRE, THE JAGUAR CROUCHED BEHIND HIS LOG-BOAT." [SEE PAGE 621.]

message confirmed my guess. "We've got him," he shouted, running up in hot haste. "He's down, going to fight us. Get your hatchet, Daddy: Menito says he can catch him with a forked stick. Oh, come on, Uncle, and see the fun!" cried he, and as soon as we had got the stick ready, the impetuous lad dragged me along until we came in sight of a strange scene. An animal about the size of a large badger lay flat on its back, flourishing its long nose, and poising its claws, ready for action. Rough, in

inclined to push on into the darkening woods beyond.

"That won't do," said Daddy Simon. "I can not hunt up water and fuel in the dark. We must camp here and cook our supper."

The young Lascar stared; but, seeing us unstrap our blankets, he seemed to guess our intent, and helped us to gather a large pile of fire-wood. If there were any dry hills ahead, our little Indian had been right, though. We found that the



"WE MUST KILL IT AT THE FIRST SHOT!"

ground was a spongy swamp, drawing water wherever we stamped it. So, instead of pitching our tent, we spread it like a big hammock, and fastened it between two poles and a large caucho-tree, whose hollow trunk formed a sort of roof. People going to camp in a tropical forest must not expect to be "lulled to sleep by the stillness of the night," as the northern poets say. In the Venezuela virgin-woods the time from sundown to midnight is almost the noisiest part of the twenty-four hours. Soon after dark, the *oriyas*, a species of whip-poor-wills, began to call to each other with a flute-like whistle; night-hawks whirled through the tree-tops; and from the depths of the jungle came now and then the scream of a larger bird; it was the time when the ocelot leaves its hiding-place and visits the thickets and the roosts of the crested bush-cock. A strange buzz was in the air. Swarms of beetles and night-butterflies seemed to be on the wing, and from time to time we heard the click of a large bat, as its jaws closed upon one of the poor buzzers. But there are bats that do not content themselves with insects, and, before we fell asleep, I noticed a black object crawling over the white

canvas of our hammock, and, slapping it with my hat, I recognized the squeaking chirp of a vampire, the *Vampirus spectrum* of the American tropics. Menito grabbed it just when it was about to take wing, and soon killed it. Whenever the night-wind stirred the woods, the trees above and around us flamed up with the glitter of a thousand luminous insects,—fire-midges, fire-flies, and fire-locusts,—most of them apparently dozing in the foliage till the wind waked them, although there were moments when they all seemed to join in a general torch-light dance, making the trees sparkle as if a shower of stars were drifting through the forest. I had been sleeping for an hour or two when Tommy shook me by the arm.

"What can be the matter with our dog?" said he, with a yawn, and rubbing his eyes. "Did you ever hear such howling? There must be something wrong!"

Rough had taken charge of our baggage at the foot of the tree, and, if there had been robbers or wild beasts about, he would have barked in a very different way. His voice sounded like the whining of a wolf—a most singular wailing howl, that might

have made a person dream of witches and werewolves. We hardly knew what to do. As soon as we tried to go to sleep and stopped talking to the dog, his howling grew worse than before. At last, we could not stand it any longer.

"We have now only that one dog," said Tommy, "or I should ask you to shoot him. He must be crazy. What shall we do about it?"

"I don't know," said I; "but I would give something if we could go to sleep."

"What will you give me?" asked Menito. "For half a dollar I will get him as still as a mouse. That dog is my countryman, and I do not want you to shoot him. Will you let me try?"

"All right," I laughed. "Go ahead."

Menito picked up his jacket and slipped down the tent-pole, and that was the last we heard of the were-wolf music. The next morning we found the two countrymen sleeping, cheek by jowl, at the foot of the tree.

The birds in the tree-tops had almost finished their morning concert when the creatures of the lower woods were still half benumbed with the heavy dew, and as we made our way through the long, wet grass we could have captured bagfuls of iguanas and lizards, if there had been room for game of that sort. By and by, however, the warmth of the rising sun penetrated the underbrush, and all flying and creeping things were now wide awake.

The young Lascar had led the way, a little faster than we could follow, until something or other seemed to draw his attention to a copse of tree-ferns at the road-side. He stopped, and, turning abruptly, grabbed me by the arm, looking as wild as a hawk.

"*Mira, mira!*" cried he, in Spanish. "Look there, what a ——" but then followed a Lascarese word of about sixteen syllables; still, looking in the direction of the coppice, I thought that the length of the word really corresponded to that of a strange creature crawling swiftly across our path. For a stretch of about fifteen yards the herbs swayed up and down, but running up, with all guns cocked, we could find only a slimy streak in the grass; the reptile must have moved with the swiftness of a panther-cat.

"A boa!" cried Tommy. "Quick—there it goes, up the tree there! You can see the boughs moving."

About twenty yards from the road stood a cluster of sago-palms, and at a considerable height from the ground their stems were joined and intertwined with a maze of cordero-vines, but in the short time it had taken us to run up, the creature had actually forced its way through that mass of tangle-wood, and was now out of sight in the tree-top. Museum

managers pay a high price for the skins of such large boas, and we tried to dislodge the monster by throwing stones and clubs against the lower branches, when Menito bethought himself of climbing a taxus-tree on the other side of the road.

"Yes, I can see it now," he shouted. "Come up here—it is 'way up in that big palm-tree; you can shoot it down like a turkey."

The lianas or bush-ropes of the Southern forests are a great help to climbers, and even old Daddy managed to follow us to the upper branches of the taxus-tree. Menito was right; the boa had taken refuge in the top of the sago-palm, and seemed to have noticed us, to judge from its motions and the uneasy glittering of its little eyes.

"Now let us try," said Tommy. "Do you think buck-shot will hit at that distance?"

"Yes, they will," said I, "but we must kill it at the first shot; if it is only wounded, it will fling itself down and give us the slip, after all. Let us both aim at its head, and fire at the same moment."

But the boa now clung to the stem of the palm, with its head on the safe side, and we came near committing the imprudence of firing at the rear of its body, when old Daddy put his finger in his mouth and gave the shrill whistle of a Mexican muleteer. The boa started, and was still listening, with its head held out erect, when our two guns went off together. Somehow or other we had both aimed a trifle too low; but the buck-shot had done their work, and broken the monster's neck-bones in several places. It started back, and, suddenly reversing its coils, threw itself into the lower branches, and came plumping to the ground. There its struggles continued, and we could thank our good fortune that we were out of the way; the reptile was at least thirty feet long, and the tail-end of its body struck out left and right with a violence that made the branches fly in every direction. It took it nearly half an hour to die, and when it lay still, and our Indians came down and tied it to a tree to pull its skin off, the tail gave a twitch that made Menito take to his heels with a scream of horror.

"Come back here, boy!" cried old Daddy. "There is no danger, I tell you—that boa is only shamming, trying to scare us; in reality, it is as dead as a door-nail."

Thus far our road had led us through swampy bottom-lands and densely wooded hillocks, but toward noon we found that the ground was getting rather rocky, and when the sun inclined to the west our guide halted on top of a steep eminence, and pointed to the open country at our feet. It was a glorious sight: the broad valley

of the Orinoco, with its bays and rocky headlands, and at the mouth of a tributary stream the mission-settlement of Soledad, in a thicket of orchards and banana-gardens.

"That is the missionary's house, I suppose?" said I, pointing to a large stone building at the junction of the two rivers.

"Yes, it used to be," said Daddy Simon. "The old government had put a Franciscan abbot in charge of the place, but the monks went away with the Spaniards, and the Indians have been left to themselves ever since."

"How are they getting on?" I asked. "Their orchards seem to be in first-rate condition."

"Oh, the trees take care of themselves," said the guide, "and the Rio Claro is full of fish the year round; there is not much danger of starving in this country."

The Rio Claro was a fine mountain-stream, with gravel banks, and we passed a place where the gravel had been piled up in mounds, some of them as much as twelve or fourteen feet high. "What is all this?" said I. "There have been gold-hunters at work here, it seems?"

"Yes, treasure-hunters," said Daddy Simon. "Some years ago, a fisher-boy found here a silver



THE BIRD-EATING SPIDER.

cup and a piece of a golden chain, and it was supposed that this must be the place where the Spaniards had buried their treasure; so a lot of people came up here from La Guayra in hopes of making fortunes. They found nothing but gravel, however, and it seems that the current of the river must have brought those things down here, and that the rest is buried somewhere farther up."

We stopped at the first cottage to inquire after a spring which old Daddy remembered to have seen near the banks of the Rio Claro. There was nobody at home but an old woman, who had nearly forgotten the language of the Spanish missionaries, but she understood what we meant when we pointed at the river and showed her our empty water-bucket. While she was jabbering away in her strange dialect, I noticed at the farther end of her porch a big cage full of little white things that seemed to move about like birds, till I came nearer and saw that they were rats—white and brown speckled tree-rats, looking somewhat like guinea-pigs, with long tails. Seeing me stare at the cage, the woman took it down and handed me a rat, with a sort of courtesy, as you would offer a stranger a flower or an orange. Tommy gave her a silver coin, about the equivalent of an American twenty-five-cent piece, whereupon we received five more rats—willy-nilly. The generous old lady would not be put off, and stuffed every one of them into one of our empty cages.

"What makes them keep such strange pets?" asked Tommy.

"They eat them," laughed old Daddy. "The old chief that lives in the big stone house fattens them by scores and hundreds. No proper person would touch such things; but what can you expect from people that do not know a Sunday from a Monday?"

The Lascar Indians seemed, indeed, to be in need of a missionary. Many of the children we met in the street were entirely naked, and when we had pitched our tent at the river-bank, some of their grown-up relations visited us in the strangest costume we had ever seen on human beings. One big chief strutted around in a stove-pipe hat, with a pair of embroidered slippers for epaulets; and a toothless squaw, looking old enough to be his grandmother, wore a boy's straw hat, with a bunch of parrot-feathers. Another woman, who could talk a little Spanish, was carrying a young child that looked as red as a boiled lobster, although her mother was almost too black to be called dark brown.

"What's the matter, Sissy?" asked Tom. "Are you sick?"

"Yes, sir; she has been steamed," said the mother.

"Steamed? How do you mean?"

"Why," was the parent's answer, "we put her in a willow basket, and hung the basket over a kettleful of boiling water."

"What did you do that for?" I asked. "Were you trying to kill her?"

"No, to save her life," said the woman. "She was bitten by an *arañon* [a venomous spider], and

that's the best remedy. The poison seems to pass out through the skin with the perspiration."

The arañon, or bird-eating spider of South America, is almost as big as a toad, red-brown, with long, hairy legs and claw-feet, and a pair of venomous, pincer-like fangs. The strangest thing about its poison is that most persons hardly feel the bite at first; but after an hour or so, their hands or feet begin to swell as if they had caught the erysipelas. The arañon often covers a whole bush with its grayish-white net, and catches birds as well as insects. The threads of its net are, indeed, as sticky as bird-lime, and strong enough to hold a good-sized canary-bird.

We made a very good bargain that afternoon. The Indians gave us a splendid king-parrot and several purple pigeons, in exchange for a few pounds of sugar and gunpowder, and the parents of our young Lascar guide sold us a nursing Midas-monkey, with a baby—a funny, nervous little young one that clasped his mother's neck as if he were trying to choke her.

While we ate our supper, a swarm of Indian children of all ages and sizes had gathered around our camp, and, after playing with our rats and monkeys, they began to throw stones at a mango-tree near the river-bank.

"What in the world can those children be after?" said I, seeing that they pursued their sport with a growing interest.

"Hallo! there is a big snake in that tree," said Tommy. "Not a boa, though," he added, when I jumped up. "It's a long red one, like those we saw in southern Yucatan."

A big coral snake lay coiled up in a fork of the tree, watching us with a pair of those glittering eyes that are supposed to paralyze birds and small animals.

"Make those boys stop, Tommy," said I. "Let us try an experiment. We can spare one of those white rats. I am going to see if the eyes of the snake will charm him."

The rats were quite tame, and the one we selected clung to the knob of my walking-stick, and stuck to his perch until I brought the knob in close proximity to the head of the serpent. They looked at each other for five or six minutes; but when the snake reared up, getting ready for action, the rat jumped back and slipped into my sleeve with

the nimbleness of a weasel. A few days after, we tried the same thing with a different result. The snake paralyzed our rat with a snap-bite, and gobbled him up when he began to stagger around like a blind puppy. So we almost suspected that little animals have generally been bitten before they act in the strange way which makes people suppose that the eyes of a snake must have bewitched them.

While we were watching the result of our experiment, one of the little boys fooled with the monkey-cage until the door came open, and, before we knew it, the Midas-monkeys jumped out, and would both have escaped if another boy had not caught them in the nick of time. But, in the scuffle, the old one dropped her baby, and, to our astonishment, the youngster whisked up an acacia-tree, with big, long thorns that prevented us from following him. All calling and coaxing was in vain, and, when we found that we could not shake him off, we fastened his mother to a long string to see if we could not make her go up and bring him down. But, for some reason or other, she refused to go, and threw herself on her back like a wild-cat when we tried to drive her up.

"Let us try Bobtail Billy," said Menito. "He likes to climb. I never saw him refuse a chance of that sort."

We at once put Menito's suggestion into execution, but it quickly proved almost too much of a success, for Billy bolted up the tree with a suddenness that nearly snapped the string. But, when he passed the baby, the little imp grabbed him, and in a twinkling had both arms around his neck. At the same moment, we pulled the string, and, though Billy struggled violently and snatched at the thorny branches left and right, the baby still stuck to him, resolved, as it seemed, to be skinned alive rather than lose this new protector fate had sent him. Down they came, locked together, and we dragged them to where the youngster's mother had been tied up in the interval. When she saw her bantling, she jumped up and made a grab at him; but, in a strange fit of jealousy, Billy now declined to surrender his charge, and he was making for the tree again, when Menito stopped him, and put all three of them in the same wire basket, to let them settle their family quarrels at their leisure.

(To be continued.)